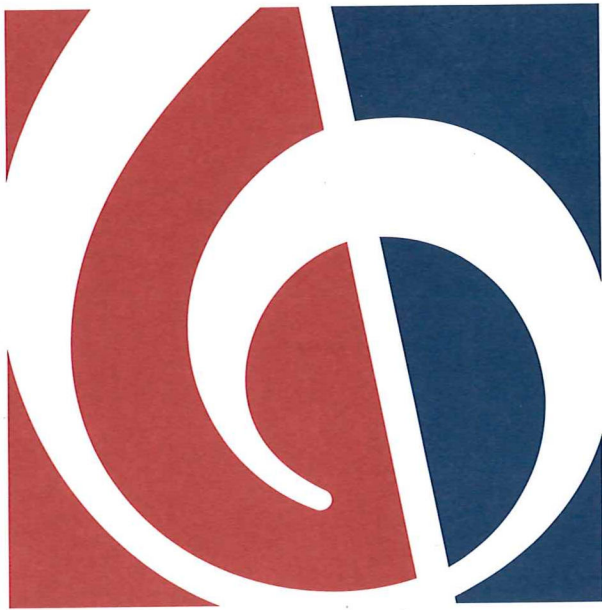


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FACULTY *of* MUSIC



2004-2005

WHERE GREAT MUSIC MEETS GREAT MINDS

Monday, October 4, 2004
7 pm. Walter Hall

University of Toronto Faculty of Music
Chamber Music Series
Presents

The Brentano String Quartet

Mark Steinberg, violin
Serena Canin, violin
Misha Amory, viola
Nina Maria Lee, cello

Oh Gesualdo, Divine Tormentor!
(composed in 2004 for the Brentano String Quartet)

Bruce Adolphe
b. 1955

Five madrigals from Book VI by Don Carlo Gesualdo, arranged for string quartet

1. Deh, come invan sospiro
2. Belta, poi che t'assenti
3. Resta di darmi noia
4. Gia piansi nel dolore
5. Moro lasso

Divertimento
(composed in 1982)

Charles Wuorinen
b. 1938

Quartet Nr. 5 (dank an Op. 132)
(composed in 1998)

Mario Davidovsky
b. 1934

— INTERMISSION —

String Quartet in D minor, D. 810 "Death and the Maiden"

Franz Schubert
1797-1828

Allegro
Andante con moto (Variations)
Scherzo (Allegro molto)
Presto - Prestissimo

Guest Artists of the Chamber Music Series are funded through the
Visiting Chamber Ensembles program at the Faculty of Music.

The Brentano String Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists, Marblehead, MA

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To learn more about how your financial support can help make this academic priority a reality, please contact Marilyn Brown at 416-946-3145.



Program Notes

BRUCE ADOLPHE

Oh Gesualdo, Divine Tormentor! (2004)

Oh Gesualdo, Divine Tormentor! is a collection of pieces by and about Gesualdo. I have chosen five of his most arresting madrigals (that is, madrigals for which some thought he should be arrested) and arranged the five-voice vocal works to fit on four instruments. The title refers to the typical sentiment in the madrigal texts of Gesualdo's time, when it seemed that nearly all poets were dying of unrequited love, and their ladies were all cruel and fair. Gesualdo perfectly depicts all this suffering and yearning in his music, far better than any composer with the possible exception of Robert Schumann. The texts become redundant quickly, but the music remains fresh, immediate, and surprising.

I would like to thank Mark Steinberg for asking me to take on this project for the Brentano String Quartet.

There is more to the story. First, you should know that before he founded the Brentano String Quartet, Mark Steinberg put together an ensemble called the Gesualdo String Quartet. (The plot thickens.) Why name a string quartet after a composer who wrote before string quartets existed? It had to do with Mark's fascination with Gesualdo's strange, dark harmonies, weird approach to voice-leading, and shocking mood swings. Where had the young violinist become acquainted with this ancient music? In a class at the Juilliard School's Pre-College Division taught by, well, me. That was more than 20 years ago. And so, when Mark called me about a Gesualdo project, it felt to me as though time had suddenly become compressed, as if the class were only yesterday.

It so happens that I not only taught Gesualdo's music to my students at Juilliard, but I led a seminar at Yale in 1984 on his music, and also composed a set of piano variations on *Moro lasso* at that time

for the pianist Sarah Rothenberg. That work was mentioned in *Soundings*, a book on 20th century music by Glenn Watkins, the eminent musicologist who edited the modern edition of Gesualdo's madrigals. Watkins also wrote the book on Gesualdo. That book, by the way, has an introduction by Stravinsky. Why Stravinsky? Read on.

The Renaissance master of mannerism Don Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, came crashing into the 20th century when Igor Stravinsky composed his *Monumentum pro Gesualdo* in 1960. Stravinsky was inspired by the "crank of chromaticism", as he called Gesualdo, and was aided and abetted in his endeavors to revive the neglected Neapolitan master by the new, accurate editions of the music prepared by Glenn Watkins. That Gesualdo murdered his first wife and her lover had been used to explain his intensely chromatic music is merely a demonstration of how low musicology can sink. Gesualdo's colleagues in chromatic cunning – Luzzaschi, Nenna, d'India – never killed anyone. Case closed.

Gesualdo himself would have thought it perfectly normal to perform his madrigals as instrumental music, without any reference to the words. In the Prince's own time, his madrigals were performed on viols as part of theatrical performances "for action of a melancholy nature", according to the contemporary treatise *Musica Scenica* by Doni.

Gesualdo's music has long been as controversial as his criminal behavior. The music historian Charles Burney wrote in 1789 that "The madrigal *Moro lasso* is presented to the musical reader as a specimen of his style, and harsh, crude, and licentious modulation; in which, the beginning a composition in A minor, with the chord of C sharp, with a sharp third, is neither consonant to the present laws of modulation, nor to those of the ecclesiastical tones..." Burney further describes Gesualdo's music as "repugnant

to every rule of transition...extremely shocking and disgusting to the ear, to go from one chord to another in which there is no relation, real or imaginary..."

Musicians love this music for its deliberate rule-bending, still-surprising harmonic twists, and unrestrained imagination. The madrigal *Moro lasso (Alas, I die)* has come to be a symbol of the restless creative spirit, and supports the non-linear view of music history.

Speaking of non-linear events, it certainly closes a circle (temporarily, perhaps) for me to return to Gesualdo on behalf of my one-time Gesualdo student, Mark Steinberg. It probably does the same for him, even if the Brentano String Quartet is named for Beethoven's Immortal Beloved rather than for a man who sent his beloved's immortal soul on its way. - *Bruce Adolphe*

CHARLES WUORINEN

Divertimento (1982)

I wrote my Divertimento in 1982 in response to a commission from my late friends Virginia and Giovannina de Blasiis, indomitable directors of the Glens Falls (NY) chamber music concerts for more than sixty years.

The work is in a single movement characterized by revisited material which, on each recurrence, is progressively compressed – somewhat in the manner of a raga, which begins slowly and contemplatively, and gradually accelerates. - *Charles Wuorinen, June 2004*

MARIO DAVIDOVSKY

String Quartet Nr. 5 (dank an Op. 132)

Mario Davidovsky was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1934. In the 1950s he moved to the USA, where he worked at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Centre with the American composer Milton Babbitt. Since then he has taught at a number of institutions, including the University of Michigan, the Manhattan School of Music, Yale University and, most

recently, Harvard. He has received a Pulitzer Prize, and awards from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller and Koussevitzky foundations.

Davidovsky rose to prominence in the contemporary music world in the 1960s, primarily through his electroacoustic works, in which he manipulated both pre-recorded and synthetic sounds. Amongst his most famous works are his series of *Synchronisms*, which combine electronics with live performers, and also explore music's spatial properties. He has, however, not neglected traditional musical forces, and has composed for such groups as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Emerson Quartet. Often, his works for live performers are inspired by sonic ideas originating in electroacoustic music – ideas that he often "transcribes" for traditional instruments. Included in his catalogue of chamber works are five string quartets, the newest of which (performed tonight) was premiered by the Mendelssohn String Quartet in 1998. - *Colin Eatock © 2004*

FRANZ SCHUBERT

String Quartet in D minor ("Death and the Maiden")

Schubert was a poet of unfulfillable longing, of human vulnerability, of the excruciating sweetness of the yearning to be at peace. He famously said of himself:

I feel myself to be the most unfortunate, the most miserable being in the world. Think of a man whose health will never be right again, and who from despair over the fact makes it worse instead of better; think of a man, I say, whose splendid hopes have come to naught, to whom the happiness of love and friendship offers nothing but acutest pain, whose enthusiasm (at least, the inspiring kind) for the Beautiful threatens to disappear; and ask yourself whether he isn't a miserable, unfortunate fellow.

My peace is gone, my heart is heavy,

*I find it never, nevermore...
so might I sing every day, since each
night when I go to sleep I hope never
again to wake, and each morning merely
reminds me of the misery of yesterday.*

In no other composer's work, with the possible exception of Shostakovich, do we find such stark and shattering juxtaposition of the human and the inhuman. Stony, unforgiving musical elements with no sense of malleability demand to be acknowledged, setting up a drama of the vulnerable individual in the clutches of destiny. Schubert's celebrated lyricism has at its core the suffering of recognizing that which cannot be had. The most tender passages very often have a quality of distance, of a vision of that most dearly hoped for and yet felt to be ungraspable. For the qualities of splendid hopes, of the happiness of love and friendship, of enthusiasm for the Beautiful which Schubert mentions are far from absent from his work. But they appear only in the guise

of dreams, representing a wounding optimism. In many ways the traveler of the *Winterreise*, a lonely soul wandering though a barren, icy landscape, is emblematic of much of this composer's output.

One of Schubert's most beloved chamber music works, written when he was 27, the D minor String Quartet is characterized quite strongly by these qualities. Its opening measures could hardly be more stern and forbidding, and are immediately answered by tremulous whispered versions of the same motif, reacting with fear and filled with questioning. The tension between these two faces of the same material motivates the unfurling drama of the movement. The second theme is filled with hope, a gently rolling, tender melody which quickly becomes unsettled and takes on an unexpected harshness, filled with desperation. At the arrival of the coda we are plunged into an abyss, cold and distant, surrounded by spectral cries. A quickening

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of the tempo allows for one more attempt at facing the crisis head-on, but dissolves in defeat at the movement's close.

The second movement is responsible for the nickname of this quartet, "Death and the Maiden," since it is a set of variations on Schubert's song of the same name. In the song, Death approaches a young maiden and says to her "Give me your hand, you lovely, tender creature. I am a friend and come not to punish. Be of good courage, I am not cruel; you shall sleep softly in my arms." The treatment of this theme here reveals the full ambiguity of the idea of Death in Schubert's music, at once terrifying and consoling. The theme is presented as a hushed chorale, austere and inexorable. A breathless, gasping variation follows, and then one with the original theme sung in the cello while the other instruments provide a richly textured, yet delicate accompaniment. The full fury of Death is unleashed in the third variation, the rhythm of the theme repeated obsessively four times as fast, with the delicate answers in the first half of the variation disappearing in the second. An exploration of a possible sense of final

peace is allowed before a terrifying, inevitable but very slow building to the climax of the movement. Its denouement glistens with the ambiguity of resignation which is both tired and finally at rest.

The Scherzo is far from the original idea of such a movement as a light joke. Filled with jabbing offbeat accents, its anxiety is dissipated in the trio which follows, now in major. Soft throughout, this trio is a perfect example of the unreachable Eden Schubert dreams of, forever out of reach. The return of the Scherzo dashes any such hopes, of course, and the movement comes to a fiery end, setting up the energetic final movement.

The final Presto is a dark galloping night ride in D minor, which keeps finding itself precariously perched in major keys. Forcefully driving almost without relief, with even more slowly moving themes accompanied by figures which dart about restlessly, the movement as it nears its close erupts into a Prestissimo coda which rushes headlong, mercilessly, to the final, brutal chords of the piece. - *Mark Steinberg*

Biography

Since its inception in 1992, **The Brentano String Quartet** has been singled out for its technical brilliance, musical insight and stylistic elegance. Within a year's time, the Brentano String Quartet claimed the distinction of being named to three major awards, winning the first Cleveland Quartet Award, the 1995 Naumburg Chamber Music Award and the 10th Annual Martin E. Segal Award. For their first appearance in Great Britain at Wigmore Hall the Brentano was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for the most outstanding debut in 1997. The Quartet became the first quartet-in-residence at Princeton University in 1999, and served as quartet-in-residence at New York University from 1995 - 2003. In 1995 they were chosen by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to participate in

the inaugural season of Chamber Music Society Two - a program designed for outstanding emerging artists and chamber musicians. Additionally, the quartet had the honor of being quartet-in-residence at London's Wigmore Hall for the 2000 - 01 season. The Brentano String Quartet has appeared with pianist Mitsuko Uchida at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, at the Library of Congress, at Lincoln Center, and in major cities in Germany, Italy, and Japan. The quartet has also collaborated with Jessye Norman in her 1998 Carnegie Hall recital as well as in the ancient amphitheater of Epidavros in Greece. In the fall of 1998, the Brentano String Quartet performed to great acclaim in various venues across Australia, including the prestigious Sydney Opera House and was featured in a "Live From Lincoln Center"

broadcast. The Brentano String Quartet has made appearances in major musical centers in North America including New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, La Jolla, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Washington, DC, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Houston, New Orleans, Kansas City, and Boston. In addition the Quartet has appeared in such European venues as Royal Festival Hall in London, the Accademia de Santa Cecilia in Rome, and in Frankfurt, Cologne, Florence, Geneva, Stuttgart, and Paris.

The Brentano's recent and upcoming festival appearances include the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, Festival Divonne in France, the Bath Festival in England, the Kuhmo International Chamber Music Festival in Finland, Chamber Music Northwest, the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival, Chautauqua, Caramoor International Music Festival, the Taos School of Music, and the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

Highlights of the quartet's 2004/05 season include appearances in New York

(Carnegie's Zankel Hall and Lincoln Center), Dallas, Houston, Berkeley, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Detroit, Wolf Trap (VA), Madrid, Salzburg, and Amsterdam, among other cities.

The Quartet is named after Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars believe to have been Beethoven's mysterious "Immortal Beloved", and to whom he wrote his famous love confession. The quartet maintains a strong interest in the music of our time and has commissioned and premiered works by Milton Babbitt, Chou Wen-chung, Charles Wuorinen, Bruce Adolphe, Steven Mackey, and Jonathan Dawe. In addition, to celebrate its tenth anniversary the quartet commissioned ten composers to write brief companion pieces to Bach's "Art of Fugue". The quartet has collaborated in recent years with Pulitzer-prize winning poet Mark Strand, commissioning poetry for performances of Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ, and in 04/05 will premiere a program combining Mr. Strand's poetry with works of Mozart and Webern.



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